C.I.S.E.T. Newsletter

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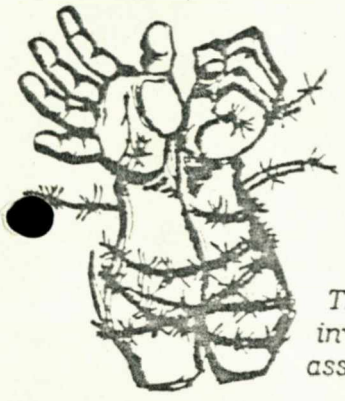
STUDENTS IN JAKARTA

Late one night in Jakarta recently, I met with Antonino, Abilio, Joao and Fernando. Upon seeing Toni, a friend with whom I'd met several times twelve months ago, I was shocked and deeply moved. His prison experience and the experiences which have filled the months since his release had wrought a great change on the confident man of last year. Never have I understood so clearly the erosion of the human spirit which is caused by profound and constant fear. But in the hours that we spoke together I sensed the extraordinary resilience of the four, who are firm in their commitment to their people's struggle, despite the fact that they have now effectively been inactivated.



Toni described his experiences since the time of his arrest - his fear of failing friends and the struggle by cracking under the strain of imprisonment and psychological torture, his shock at discovering that people who had claimed to be supporters of the struggle were in fact informers, his personal pain at the disintegration of so much of his own life and future. Who knows how many more months or years will he and the others have to endure the circumstances they are presently enduring?

All of them want just one thing now: to leave Indonesia as quickly as possible. They are in complete non-cooperation with the Indonesian Government. Repeated invitations to meet with Moerdani have been refused, as have offers of financial assistance.

After another spate of "mysterious killings" in Java they are afraid to leave their house, except for weekly visits to the Dutch Embassy. But even in their own house they are subject to daily intimidation by plain clothes military who visit frequently and provide constant psychological stress. The children in their street have been instructed to watch their house and report on all activities and visitors.

All were heartened to learn that their case is still alive outside Indonesia. They are in need of financial assistance and many days eat only once for fear that their money will run out. However, they stressed that more than anything else they want continued international support in the form of lobbying through appropriate channels for the hasty resolution of their case and their release from Indonesia.

Abilio sat completely silent and removed throughout our discussion. As we walked towards a taxi to go back to town he said just one thing: "please don't forget what it's like for us here."